

March 27, 2012

Dear Honorable Representatives,

I am a father of two adopted sons with mental challenges, one with a form of Autism. I think it is great to help those with Autism. I think it would be even greater still to help all the mentally challenged in Michigan. Michigan is one of only seven states left to lack equivalence. And significantly, none of the parity states have rescinded their parity laws.

You have probably already heard of the statistical long term dollar savings of treating mental illness early and thoroughly, of lives being made productive and an asset to the community. Let me share with you another cost saved by treating mental illness early and thoroughly. In 1976 I had difficulties adjusting to college. In 1977 my world began to unravel and I would begin ten years of severe mental illness. I was deathly afraid all day, every day. And every night I would have terrifying nightmares. I felt alone for ten years. Even with former close friends I talked but I couldn't feel like I communicated with anyone. I felt like I was on a different world with recognizable strangers. At times the constant psychic pain made me wish I would die. This living death lasted for ten years until I got the right combination of medications.

I became a Parent Support Partner with the Association for Children's Mental Health so that I could empower parents to help their children who have mental illness, so that those children might not go through the horrors that I went through. You can make a bigger difference than I can. I am asking you to support Mental Health Parity in addition to supporting coverage for children with Autism by including a Mental Health Parity bill with SB 414, 415, and 981 so that you can help vulnerable, helpless children not have to suffer as I did when they can be helped with treatments and medication that are available.

Sincerely,

Jim McNaughton
6710 City View Drive
Hudsonville, MI 49426-9000
616-669-5961 (home)
616-301-0598 (office)

james-mcnaughton@sbcglobal.net